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SUBJECT: UNSC IRAN SANCTIONS COMMITTEE FIRST MEETING

REF: BRUSSELS 0176

¶1. (SBU) Iran Sanctions Committee Chairman, Belgian PermRep Johan Verbeke, convened the group's first meeting on January 23. Verbeke said the Committee's role is to facilitate and monitor effective implementation of resolution 1737 (2006). The Committee should be faithful to the letter and spirit of 1737, and the unanimous adoption of the resolution by the Council gives the Committee a "solid foundation" on which to work.

¶2. (SBU) Verbeke said that adoption of Committee guidelines would be the first order of business, but he emphasized that guidelines work should not prevent the Committee from taking decisions on substantive matters. For example, the Committee may need to decide on issues related to exemptions, deletions, additions, and violations. "Guidelines are helpful, but not necessary," said Verbeke.

¶3. (SBU) In addition to guidelines, Verbeke highlighted other immediate and upcoming tasks on which he intends the Committee to focus. National reports are due to the Committee on February 21 and Verbeke plans to write a letter to all UN Member States, prior to that date, reminding them of their obligation to report on Iran sanctions implementation. In addition, the Committee chairman must report to the Security Council by March 23. Verbeke also plans to seek from the IAEA information regarding action taken by that organization pursuant to the new resolution, specifically with regard to technical assistance.

¶4. (SBU) Verbeke concluded the meeting by stressing that much time was lost between the adoption of the resolution and the convening of the sanctions committee, and now "we need to work with intensity in the coming weeks." The committee will meet "at least once a week."

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: Our tentative appraisal after the first meeting of the Committee suggests that Verbeke will be an effective chair and a helpful partner to the U.S. REFTEL informed us that Belgium's MFA wants Belgium to be "exemplary in carrying out the terms of the resolution" because it is chairing the Iran Committee. Verbeke today showed good initiative and said the right things. Verbeke will circulate guidelines that USUN helped to draft later this week, and the Committee will discuss them on January 30. As in the North Korea Sanctions Committee, we expect extensive and unconstructive edits from Russia and China to constrain the Committee's substantive work.

WOLFF